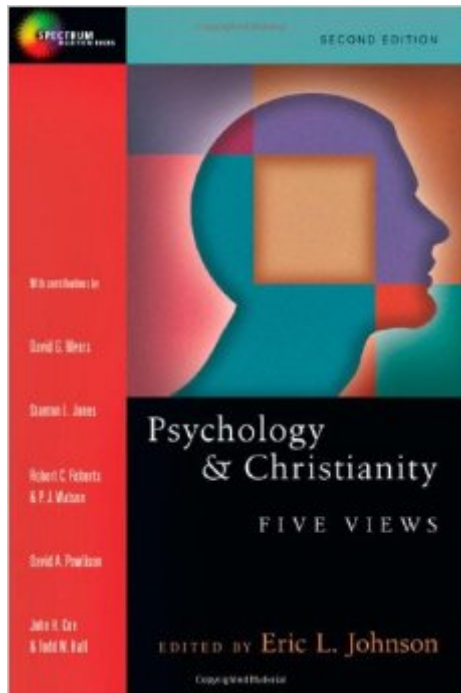


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# Psychology & Christianity: Five Views (Spectrum)



## Synopsis

How are Christians to understand and undertake the discipline of psychology? This question has been of keen interest (and sometimes concern) to Christians because of the importance we place on a correct understanding of human nature. Psychology can sometimes seem disconnected from, if not antithetical to, Christian perspectives on life. How are we to understand our Christian beliefs about persons in relation to secular psychological beliefs? This revised edition of a widely appreciated text now presents five models for understanding the relationship between psychology and Christianity. All the essays and responses have been reworked and updated with some new contributors including the addition of a new perspective, the transformative view from John Coe and Todd Hall (Biola University). Also found here is David Powlison (Westminster Theological Seminary) who offers the biblical counseling model. The levels-of-explanation model is advanced by David G. Myers (Hope College), while Stanton L. Jones (Wheaton College) offers an entirely new chapter presenting the integration model. The Christian psychology model is put forth by Robert C. Roberts (Baylor University) now joined by Paul J. Watson (University of Tennessee, Chattanooga). Each of the contributors responds to the other essayists, noting points of agreement as well as problems they see. Eric L. Johnson provides a revised introduction that describes the history of Christians and psychology, as well as a conclusion that considers what might unite the five views and how a reader might evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of each view. *Psychology and Christianity: Five Views* has become a standard introductory textbook for students and professors of Christian psychology. This revision promises to keep it so.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am currently a Master of Divinity student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Those familiar with the seminary know that just over ten years ago a significant debate took place concerning the relationship of Psychology and Christianity. The school emerged with an adjusted position. They now advocate a practice of counseling known as "Biblical Counseling". This approach - championed by Jay Adams beginning in the 70's - is defined by its commitment to Scripture and the conviction that psychology is unhelpful for understanding or healing. A rash conclusion would be to see the Biblical Counseling position as the only viable option for Christians. In fact, committed Christians do maintain divergent opinions on the subject of counseling, psychology and Christian confession. I have long enjoyed multi-view titles that many Christian publishers have been making available. InterVarsity Press has Psychology and Christianity: Five Views as part of their immensely helpful Spectrum series. This book serves as an introductory text to the various approaches to psychology and counseling from a Christian perspective. This updated version has chapters devoted to "Level-of-Explanation", "Integrated", "Christian Psychology", "Transformative" and "Biblical Counseling" approaches. The defining characteristic of the multi-view books are the short chapters following the presentations of each view. Those short response chapters allow the authors of different views to discuss areas of agreement and disagreement. This makes short work for readers who wish to discover the crux of debate. Despite the historical vitriol this subject has known, each contributor is calm and gracious towards their dissenters.

The scope of "Psychology and Christianity Five Views" is to show the five primary views of Psychology in relation to Christianity, or as the editor (Eric L. Johnson) says, "Our goal in a book like this is ultimately to discern God's view of psychology and Christianity (5 Views, 295)." The book's aim, on the other hand comes in the form of application, it hopes to educate and help counselors understand and develop a Christian Philosophy for counseling, "it does this by exploring five major positions evangelicals have taken regarding the relationship of psychology and the Christian faith (5 Views, 38)." As can be surmised, this book deals with the field of psychology, and in particular it deals with how five different Christian experts try to understand this broad field of study. A logical question that most modern readers may have is the relevancy of Christian psychology. The answer to that question can be shown briefly through history, claims the editor. The fact is that Christianity

brought psychology to the West through great thinkers such as Roger Bacon, Descartes, Copernicus and many others (5 Views, 10). The editor goes on to say, "...if we define psychology broadly as a rigorous inquiry into human nature and how to treat its problems and advance its will-being, Christians have been thinking and practicing psychology for centuries (5 Views, 14)." The editor also notes that late modernism was a reaction against history, thus Christianity. The "moderns" in the West kept trying to exclude biblical study as well as philosophical reflection, while at the same time trying to turn psychology into a natural science (5 Views, 19). This in turn created tension between the tradition of the "aged" church (which had been around for centuries) and the "modern" science of psychology.

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